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The Evening Star

The Good Grey Lady Is No. 2, and Not Really Trying Harder

By Joseph C. Goulden

In November the Evening Star *boasted of staff writer Haynes Johnson in promotional ads as "America's foremost national reporter." Its claim was more than advertising hyperbole. Johnson, at age thirty-eight, carries a byline that means something in the Washington circles that really matter. He won a Pulitzer prize for reporting the Selma racial clashes, and he has authored three well-received books— a study of black Washington that began as a* Star *series; an authoritative account of the Bay of Pigs; and a biography of Senator J. William Fulbright, the latter with Bernard Gwertzman, now in Moscow for the* New York Times.

Presidential candidates and Senators and Cabinet members answer the telephone when Haynes Johnson calls, and they read what he writes. Star *editor Newbold Noyes, recognizing Johnson as his reportorial ace, gave him commensurate treatment: to choose his own assignments; to spend, with minimal accountability, a personal travel budget; and to take periodic leaves of absence and prolonged vacations to write his books. In short, Johnson had the sort of arrangement many reporters dream about but few achieve—freedom of mobility and of expression, and an editor who left him alone to write.*

Two weeks after the promotional advertising appeared, Haynes Johnson's byline was on the front page of the Washington Post*—a switch of allegiance as startling in Washington journalism as Rogers Morton's defection to the Democrats would be in Washington politics.*

Haynes Johnson writing for the *Washington Post*. "I couldn't believe it when I read your name on the front page this morning," a former *Star* colleague wrote him. With the methodology of amateur Kremlinologists, *Star*-gazers around the city tried to plumb the significance of the shift. "Haynes got fed up with all those pro-war editorials and the conservative tone of the *Star* in general," one insider insisted. Another who claimed privity to Johnson's thinking said: "Haynes kept writing memos to Noyes telling him how to perk up the *Star*, and Noyes and some of the other brass got fed up with him. Noyes said—and this is true, because a secretary I know heard him say it—'The next time Johnson writes one of those things and tells me he has a job offer, I'm going to let him take it.'" And yet another: "This shows the *Star* has really had it, when they can't hold their top man. The linage is down, they don't give a damn about good news coverage, and Johnson was close enough to the top to see how hopeless it is."

Unfortunately for dramatic journalism, these stories fall somewhat short of the truth. That they do is in a way appropriate, for the *Star* is not a very dramatic place. It is Washington's second newspaper—and, unlike Avis, it is having considerable trouble convincing Washington that it is really trying harder. Its executives use the words "second newspaper" comfortably in their conversations, even with an outsider, and without the slightest display of expectation that they ever expect the *Star* to be anything else.

"Our goal is to make the *Star* the best *evening* newspaper in the United States, the best *conservative* paper going," a key editorial officer told me. That the *Star* is ever to be the best *Washington* newspaper—financially and in editorial heft—is something its executives tacitly concede is not to be; the *Star* has surrendered local leadership to the *Washington Post*, which is morning and liberal, and which is, as editor Noyes says, "a fantastic paper from an economic point of view."

The economic chasm between the two papers is obvious to readers who plod through the *Post*'s seemingly endless columns. Back up a few years for historical perspective, and the gap is even more spectacular.

In March 1955, when the *Post* purchased the rival morning *Washington Times-Herald* and killed everything in it except the name and some coveted columns and comics, the *Evening Star* totally dominated Washington journalism. Its forty-two million lines of advertising made it the fifth largest newspaper in the nation. The *Post*, with twenty-five million lines, barely made the top fifty list. In circulation, the *Post* ranked third behind the *Star* and *Times-Herald*.

Editorially, the *Star* had the ear of mainstream Washington, both in the local and national context. In the Eisenhower years, it found the quiet, low-voiced nirvana so long its ideal of how a nation should be run. It covered the city with blanket thoroughness down to civic association and ox roast level.

Fifteen years later the statistics have changed more than has the *Star*. The *Post* now ranks third in the nation in advertising linage (behind the *Los Angeles Times* and *Miami Herald*) with seventy million lines, while the *Star* with forty-one million lines is actually worse off than it was in 1953. The *Post* holds commanding circulation leads in both daily (487,829 to 312,146) and Sunday (641,790 to 358,754) editions.

Because of its ad linage, the *Post*'s news hole—the space available for editorial matter—often looks like Grand Canyon; the *Star*'s more like a minor cascade in Rock Creek Park. The *Post* spends around $6 million a year to support an editorial staff of 370; the *Star*, slightly more than $4 million on 260 staffers. The *Post*'s foreign desk no longer considers the *Star* a competitor. "Frankly, we pay more attention to beating the *Times*," a desk man there said. On local and national stories, *Star* reporters complain the *Post* often outmans them by two or three to one.

Influence is an immeasurable quality, but there are guidelines which suggest, if not prove, which newspaper is read, if not always heeded. An example: Be-

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tween September 3 and November 7, 1969, the *Congressional Record* index shows 223 insertions of *Post* editorials, news articles, and other matter; only 120 for the *Star*. Through the Washington Post/Los Angeles Times News Service, what the *Post* says is heard around the world; the *Star*'s voice doesn't carry much beyond Bowie and Vienna. Further, the *Star*'s editorial conservatism is not shared by much of its urban audience, a fact recognized by many of its staff members. Columnist Mary McGrory, who deeply loves the *Star* and admires the men who run it, says candidly, "Washington has a new audience—a readership that is younger, more rebellious, more questioning. The *Post* goes after it, and we don't."

Which is not to imply that the auctioneer's chant is about to be heard on the *Star's* Virginia Avenue doorstep. It has many things going for it, both financially and editorially.

The *Star* is renowned as a "reporter's newspaper," whose columns are as objective and as free of individual and corporate bias as fallible humans can make them. It is no coincidence that Frank B. Noyes, a *Star* president, served as president of the Associated Press for thirty-eight years, longer than any man. "The *Star* is probably the only major paper in the country that never 'gets mad' at anyone in print," said a man who has been in Washington journalism for four decades.

The *Star* occasionally does show its displeasure in the society pages: woman-about-town Barbara Howar once told a *Women's Wear Daily* interviewer, "I canceled my *Star* subscription after I finished house-training my dog." Mrs. Howar claims the *Star* didn't put her name in the paper for the next three years. But on a daily basis, the *Star*, as does the AP, sells its news product on the basis of reliability.

"For each of the past three years, our profit has been greater than the preceding year, and we have increased our dividends a couple of years," says John H. Kauffmann, since April, 1968, the president of the Evening Star Newspaper Company. He is a handsome man with a startling shock of blonde hair ("Golden Boy" they call Jack Kauffmann behind his back at the *Star*). His nervously restless hands reflect an impatience to get on with the business of correcting some things at the *Star* which he recognizes are wrong. And soon.

As a privately held company, with ownership split between three of its founding families, the *Star* does not publish revenue figures. All that Kauffmann will say on this point is: "We're a very profitable company. We have a tremendous cash flow, and we have enough money for diversification. We're now trying to buy a book publishing company, and we're always looking for more television and radio operations. The WMAL stations (AM, FM, and TV) are all money-makers, too." *

Haynes Johnson had been at the Post *for less than a week, and he still wasn't sure he was comfortable there. "Leaving the* Star *was a searing experience, a very emotional thing for me, a very involved thing. I worked there for twelve years. It was a family atmosphere where you liked the people and respected the editors.*

"Some people might think these words are hackneyed and out of date, but I don't know how else to say it. The Star *is a decent, honorable newspaper, run by decent, honorable men—gentlemen, all of them."*

Haynes Johnson paused to glance around the Post's *newsroom, uncomfortably crowded these days as editor Ben Bradlee continues to pack his staff with men who, like Johnson, were proven stars elsewhere. The* Post, *Johnson continued, has a different "feel" than the* Star; *he used the words dynamic and exciting, and he talked again of the low-key* Star.

"Sometimes I think this is to their disadvantage. Often I thought it would be better if they were a little tougher, and more competitive."

"To understand the *Star*," begins Newbold Noyes, whose strong jaw, at age fifty-one, is beginning to become just a bit heavy, "one must keep in mind that it has longer continuity of single direction than any paper in the country—that is, operating without a merger, or a sale, or outsiders coming into it." It has been in the same hands since 1867 when Newbold Noyes' great-grandfather, Crosby S. Noyes, who had hitchhiked into town in a farmer's wagon with $1.61 in his pocket, teamed with George W. Adams, a *New York World* correspondent; Samuel H. Kauffmann, a Treasury Department employee; and two other men to purchase the 15-year-old *Evening Star*.

Though less than a century old, Washington was a notorious newspaper graveyard, littered with the tombstones of more than one hundred publications founded by men of great expectations, political and otherwise. Political factions kept the remaining publications solvent; no paper cared enough about local news to assign a reporter to it. The *Star*'s founder, printer Joseph Borrows Tate, had a unique idea: His paper would be "free from party trammels or sectarian influences . . . [and] devoted in an especial manner to the local interests of the beautiful city which bears the honored name Washington."

Tate's credo, printed 118 years ago, remains the *Star*'s basic purpose. One of the city's elder statesmen of journalism mused to me, "The *Star* became great because it was the first Washington paper that didn't wag its finger in the President's face and tell him what was wrong with him and his goddamned policies. The *Star* caught the tempo of the city—you didn't violate civil service rules, you met a nice sweet little girl in the office, you married her and bought a row house, and you quit after thirty years to gaze into the sunset. The *Star* was patterned to fit these regularized lives. It didn't excite people, and this suited advertisers and the Board of Trade fine. The *Star* was the medium through which the good solid commercial burghers who run this town held the whole thing together."

The *Star*'s conservatism—and its negativism on such issues as home rule—pleased the House District Committee, which reciprocated by providing the money to pay for favored *Star* campaigns: reclamation of Potomac Park from marshland; the free library; the District Building; and preservation of Rock Creek Park.

Washington's business establishment rewarded the *Star* with the bulk of the city's retail advertising. During the first half of the century, according to a man who was in a position to know, the *Star* possessed the muscle to demand—and receive—more than fifty percent of the advertising budget of any establishment which expected decent display. The store could divide the remainder as it wished between the *Post, News,* and *Times-Herald*. At one point during the early 1950's, the *Star* had more than fifty percent of the advertising from the city's twenty-five largest accounts.

From this position of strength, the *Star* resolutely beat back all competitors, local and foreign—"the powerful, rich, and clever of the newspaper world," as former president Samuel H. Kauffmann once called them. But although it wasn't apparent at the time, the death of one of these competitors cracked the foundation under the *Star*'s pedestal. Here some background is in order.

The *Washington Post* and *Washington Times-Herald* were both published in the morning, but had little else in common. The *Times-Herald*, owned by Colonel Robert McCormick, was called not-so-jokingly the "Washington edition of the *Tribune*" and gave read-

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* *Star* subsidiaries own WLVA radio and TV in Lynchburg, stations which also cover the Roanoke market; and WCIV-TV in Charleston, South Carolina. The *Star* is fifty percent owner of a new venture called Talstar Company, which is marketing computer equipment for newspaper production.

ers George Sokolsky, Westbrook Pegler and Victor Reisel. The *Post*—well, the *Post* was then what the *Post* is today.

During its last years, the *Times-Herald* lost vast amounts of money. The *Post* also had red-ink years, but owner Eugene Meyer was able—and willing—to meet the deficits from his personal fortune. Colonel McCormick, ill and near death, was not, and he wanted to rid himself of the *Times-Herald* for estate planning purposes. Thus, the paradox of a smaller newspaper buying out a larger competitor. Indeed, in reader acceptance, the *Times-Herald* ranked alongside the *Star* until the day it folded. Social scientist Stanley K. Bigman of American University, in a Ford Foundation study, found that immediately prior to the *Times-Herald*'s demise, the "regular" readership of the city's newspapers was:

Star	forty-five percent
Times-Herald	forty-five percent
Post	thirty-three percent
News	twenty-five percent

There was little overlap of readership. Only nine percent of the regular *Times-Herald* readers also read the *Post;* only eighteen percent read one of the afternoon papers. But four months after the *Times-Herald* was sold to the *Post* for $8 million, the readership had reshuffled as follows:

Star	forty-six percent
Post	fifty-five percent
News	twenty-five percent

The acquisition of a morning monopoly doubled the *Post*'s daily circulation overnight—from 201,645 in 1954 to 380,607 in 1955. The Sunday circulation went from 200,163 to 393,382. The *Star*'s gains, conversely, were minor—234,660 to 245,642 daily; 264,437 to 273,244 Sunday.

The *Times-Herald,* in its last full year, carried twenty-one million lines of advertising; the *Star,* forty-two million; and the *Post,* twenty-four million. In 1955, a year after the sale, the *Star* had forty-five million, the *Post,* thirty-six million.

The figures for the remainder of the decade are an anomaly. In terms of circulation growth, the *Star* led by a slight margin. But in terms of total circulation, the *Post* continued the commanding lead it acquired by the *Times-Herald* purchase. But in advertising, the situation was entirely different. As the chart illustrates (see page 30) the *Star*'s curve is flat; the *Post*'s resembles the upward flight of one of Frank Howard's homeric pop flies. The *Post* passed the *Star* in 1959, and is still soaring. The *Star* curve shows occasional ripples, but never strays far—either up or down—from the 1954 watermark.

What happened? How did one of America's large, important newspapers lose its leadership in the short space of a decade? The easy answer—the one *Star* executives prefer—is that the *Post* has a morning monopoly, while the *Star* must share the afternoon field with the *News.* Among the other reasons offered are: reader preference for a morning paper; heavy spending on the *Post* by Eugene Meyer, then by son-in-law Philip Graham, now by daughter Katharine Graham; and the *Post*'s sophisticated sensationalism. But another answer—and a more convincing one—lies deep within the *Star* itself.

Folks keep coming and folks keep going,
The world keeps shrinking, and the town keeps growing
But the old Star *presses, they just keep rolling along.*
—Ditty sung at *Star*'s 100th anniversary banquet for employees, December 15, 1952.

That the *Star* is a family-owned newspaper, and that it is heavily encrusted with family tradition, and that its executive suite is populated with a melange of cousins, brothers-in-law, uncles, and sons from two prolific family groups are facts germane to this story because whatever the *Star* is today, it is the product of the Kauffmann and Noyes families.*

The *Star* has had four editors since the Kauffmann/Noyes/Adams troika took command in 1867; three bore the name Noyes (the one outsider, the very capable Benjamin McKelway, served from 1946 to 1963, when no family member was available). Editor Crosby Noyes had covered the trial and hanging of John Brown in 1859; his great-grandson, current editor Newbold Noyes, covered the Alger Hiss trial. Current president John H. Kauffmann is a great-grandson of the first troika president, Samuel H. Kauffmann. Nine brothers and/or cousins of these top executives have upper echelon jobs at the *Star* or at its broadcasting enterprises. And a fifth generation is on the way.

Nepotism and a respect for tradition are not necessarily bad for a business. Several outstanding things about the *Star,* in fact, are a result of decisions made several generations ago (for instance, the complete separation of business and editorial offices was written into the Evening Star Company's formal bylaws early in the century). And Smith Hempstone, of the Noyes clan, who is due to become chief editorial writer early in 1970, proved himself as a foreign correspondent for the *Chicago Daily News,* as a Nieman fellow, and as a fellow of the prestigious Institute for Current World Affairs before entering the family business. On nepotism, Newbold Noyes says, "I really don't know why you have to apologize for why you do something which your family has been doing for a hundred years."

Yet even Noyes volunteers the observation that he is more conscious of history and family continuity "as a possible drawback than something that gives you security."

Unfortunately for the *Star,* it did bog down in tradition and family during the very period it faced its most strenuous competitive situation.

In 1949, Samuel H. Kauffmann, grandson of the first troika president, became *Star* president. Almost immediately he underwent surgery for removal of a lung. Still later, another ailment resulted in a total loss of hearing. At meetings an aide had to sit beside Kauffmann with a child's "magic slate," scrawling notes so he could follow the discussion.

A *Star* executive who begins with the careful declaration that he admires Sam Kauffmann, both personally and as an executive, nonetheless adds, "There is no doubt that we needed a stronger, younger man at the helm during that period of flux. We simply did not recognize how serious a threat the *Post* would be, nor that the Grahams would spend as much as they did on their paper." Had not Kauffmann been "family," this man believes, he would have been eased out. An outsider is more pungent: "Put the whole mess on Kauffmann," he says. "The *Star* had its golden opportunity in the 1950's and didn't do a damned thing to take advantage of it. What kind of jelly-belly president is that?"

Kauffmann retired in 1963, to be replaced by Crosby Noyes Boyd, then sixty. Insiders give Boyd a mixed scorecard—not for lack of managerial ability, which they avow he had in abundance, but because he, too, had spent his working life in the company, and had no really new ideas to offer. And new ideas the *Star* did need.

John Kauffmann chooses his words carefully when discussing the *Star*'s recent past, for the men involved are his kin and his friends. But he does tell a story that indicates the atmosphere he found—and didn't like—when he became president.

"I saw our people doing something a certain way, and I asked why. 'That's our policy,' I was told. 'Who set the policy?' I asked. 'I don't know, but we've always done it this way because it is *policy.*' Well, I told him, 'It's no longer our policy.'"

Another story Kauffmann tells is possibly apocryphal. It seems an executive once adopted a stray cat that appeared at the *Star* and instructed a secretary to order a daily bottle of milk for it. Years [illegible] and the execu-

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tive died. But for some fifteen years, Kauffmann says, someone in the organization continued paying a bill for that daily bottle of milk.

"You get the idea?" Jack Kauffmann asked.

So what is Kauffmann doing?

He sees, first of all, a continuing preference for the *Star* "in the upper income brackets," both readers and advertisers. "We have more Garfinckel ads than the *Post*, but not the cut-rate furniture and that sort of thing."

He is trying to dispel the *Star*'s rather universal image as a stuffy, humorless, conservative institution. One reason is personal: Jack Kauffmann enjoys laughter and the tinkle of ice in a glass and other things that make up The Good Life. He's not a swinger, by jet-set standards, but not a man to be found at home by the TV. One socialite complained of the *Star*: "There's too much drinking and pinching girls' behinds over there. If Jack Kauffmann walks up behind me one more time, I'll hit him." But for business reasons, Kauffmann wants the *Star* to be known as something other than "The Grey Lady of Pennsylvania Avenue" (a phrase once used by *Time* magazine that still rankles him). "We're starting a series of ads in the national media next year that will call us '118 years old and still growing.'" Kauffmann wants to market the concept of a "*Star* communications group" of which the newspaper would be the keystone. Kauffmann is in what he calls "the newspaper industry" to make money, and if improving the *Star* is necessary, he'll do it.

Both Kauffmann and Noyes say they are discouraging further *Star* nepotism —save at the very top. At one time the *Star* could find a spot for almost any relative who wandered into the office. "The hell with that," says Kauffmann. "Those days are gone forever." Says Newby Noyes: "The fifth generation is finding it harder and harder. We're not pushing the kids into it at all." One of Noyes' sons works for the *Paris Herald-Tribune*; the other is studying to be an anthropologist.

And, finally, Kauffmann is coming down from his Maryland estate on the Potomac to make friends with the city. He says he lunches twice weekly with Mayor Walter Washington, and is friendly with key people in the city government. Although he and other *Star* executives assiduously avoid social involvement with national politicians, Kauffmann thinks the local situation is different. "Christ," he says, "we're all after the same thing—the subway, Three Sisters, cleaning up crime, a better city in general."

"I can't complain about a single thing that ever happened to me at the Star," *said Haynes Johnson. "The* Star *gave me an opportunity to grow. Other people told you it was a reporter's newspaper? That's true. For example, in 1961, I thought we should do an in-depth study of how the Negro lived in Washington. I suggested it to Charlie Seib [then an assistant managing editor, now the managing editor] and he said, go ahead. I worked on it for four months or so. It was the kind of reporting assignment that meant something.*

"The editorials? I agreed with very little on that page, but what was there didn't affect my work, and not a line was ever changed in a story I wrote because of editorial policy. But the editorials did cause me considerable concern.

"Take the moratorium. The Star *was getting pretty close to McCarthyism, with all its talk of 'violence' and 'Communist influences.' I found those editorials offensive." Pausing, as if for emphasis, Johnson repeated the word. "Offensive."*

"But these things, by themselves, would not be enough to make me leave the Star. *It's very involved. I wanted a national audience, which I wasn't getting at the* Star. *I considered a lot of offers, a lot of possibilities. Magazines. Free-lancing. The* Times. *But I'm a newspaperman, and I wanted to continue working for newspapers. I was at the point in my professional development where I needed to change if I was to continue growing."*

As editor of the *Evening Star*, Newby Noyes is responsible for both editorial and news content. His newspaper has been accused of many things: aloofness from blacks; a gradualistic approach to civil rights more appropriate to Dixie than to D. C.; unblinking endorsement of hard-line Vietnam policies; toadyish friendship with incumbent administrations; in sum, a "respectable" status quo conservatism, to the right of Rockefeller, to the left of the *Chicago Tribune*.

Noyes has heard all these criticisms, and he gives no sign that they bother him, for he has a sincere man's conviction that his beliefs are honest, even if not universally popular. ("Hang Newby for ignorance, you'd never get him on malice," says a staffer.) And, as *Star* editor, he determines editorial policy. Last June, The American Newspaper Guild brought together black leaders and media men to talk about community coverage. Soon after Noyes arrived, a black woman denounced him as a "racist bastard."

Noyes reddened but didn't flinch. "I don't like to be called a racist bastard, just as you don't like to be called names," he told the woman. "We do a great many stupid things at the *Star*. But we don't have a board of directors who sit down and decide how a story should be handled."

School board member Julius Hobson has called the *Star*'s editorial policy "lousy" and "against the black community and all social change." Yet when Hobson sought abolition of the school district's "track system" in 1967, the liberal *Post* dismissed him as a crazy left-winger undeserving of attention. Although a *Post* reporter covered suit proceedings daily, nothing appeared in print until the final day—when he won. The *Star*, conversely, gave the suit the significant space on a daily basis.

Those within and without the *Star* think its attitude toward blacks is *noblesse oblige*, not conscious racism. A staff member who sat on a guild negotiating committee that included three blacks remembers a *Star* labor relations man stammering, in attempted camaraderie: "Some of my best friends are black. . . . We've never had any problems here. . . . We've always hired the colored." A black who was once a *Star* reporter recollected, "My friends used to give me a rough time, working for that paper. I'd tell them, 'read the stories, not the editorials.' But the *Star*'s reputation in the community is such that people tend to assume the worst, and not give us credit for what we are doing."

Says Noyes: "The strategy of publishing in this town would obviously dictate that we carve out a moderate/conservative position somewhat to the right of the *Post*. It makes no good sense to compete with them as to who could be the brightest liberal paper in town. I strive to make the *Star* an enlightened, progressive, conservative paper rather than hidebound reactionary."

The fact that the *Post* is liberal, Noyes says, has nothing to do with the *Star*'s conservatism. "We'd be that kind of paper even if there were no other paper in town."

During times of social change, Noyes says, "There's a part for somebody to play who is not making themselves the cutting edge, the vanguard; for someone who will take a cool look at some of these things (such as Medicare) to see if they actually work . . . and not to wait three or five years until you find yourself in one hell of a mess."

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On race, Noyes says, "It is [illegible] and stabilizing to have a voice in the community that speaks not in the tone of anger, lecturing whites as to what they should do, but gently bringing them about. . . . We try to lower our voices and speak with a quieter tone . . . so the more conservative population does not feel they are being pushed into a corner, but are doing what is right and proper when they obey the law."

The man responsible for putting the *Star*'s editorial views into writing the past three decades has been John Cline, who is retiring this month at age sixty-five. A lawyer by training (and son of a *Star* news executive), Cline writes the law-and-order editorials that infuriate local civil libertarians. He is an advocate of the on-the-other-hand writing that states both sides of an issue before the *Star* gets around to giving its own opinion. One sifts through considerable padding to find a polite admonition to keep off the grass. But, as Haynes Johnson complained, the *Star* is capable of editorial mischief: It agreed enthusiastically with the Justice Department's warnings that the November 15 mobilization would end in violence, and was unhappy with the Administration's decision to permit the Pennsylvania Avenue march. But after the march, the *Star* called the crowd "enthusiastic, touching, zany, impressive, disorganized, collectively insolent, individually polite . . . intensely young and totally American. . . . There can be little doubt about what it all means. It means that a major segment of the coming generation is impatient for peace."

There are some quiet changes under way on the *Star*'s editorial page. Paul Conrad, a *Los Angeles Times* cartoonist as acerbic as Herblock, guests at least once weekly. *Star* executives are quietly shopping for younger, livelier editorial writers. And careful readers will find items seemingly incongruous with the *Star*'s conservative line. Last fall, for instance, the *Star* said it saw nothing wrong with homosexual acts between consenting adults in private.

Noyes says he neither expects nor demands that reporters share his philosophical views. "Look," he told me, "I know my newsroom is filled with young reporters who are liberal Democrats. Well, I'm not, but that's none of their business. All I expect of them is that they do an objective job of reporting."

As evidence of reportorial independence, Noyes points to Mary McGrory, who has made a career of iconoclastic irreverence towards persons the *Star* editorial pages take seriously. Miss McGrory had been at the *Star* as a book reviewer for seven years when Noyes sent her to the 1954 Army-McCarthy hearings. "I covered them in a cheeky, irreverent way," Miss McGrory says. "My pieces outraged a lot of people, but they seemed to amuse a lot of people, too. Newby Noyes [illegible] they were

Star editorial page regularly flails persons, whom she admires, in print (such as Senator Eugene McCarthy), Miss McGrory says, "I find irresistible the fact that I can write what I want to write, and it goes into the paper." She ignores the editorial page. "It's perfectly dreadful, dreadful. I don't like the point of view, the tone, anything about it. . . ."

Reporter/columnist Betty Beale has no philosophical reservations whatsoever. Ostensibly, Miss Beale writes about society. But she has a knack of going to parties where the chatter sounds like *Star* editorials. Her column summarizing a "week of partying and polling the posh persons" on the moratorium produced this highly unempirical conclusion: "No matter how sympathetic Washingtonians felt, *none* were in favor of more marches. *No one* seemed to think the mobilization accomplished anything as far as changing government policy, and some expressed the opinion that government by demonstration was the road to anarchy." (Among the persons she quoted by name were Mrs. John Mitchell, eighty-five-year-old Alice Longworth, and Dean Acheson's daughter-in-law.)

Star colleagues complain that Miss Beale "writes about the wrong generation," and lacks a sense of humor. Her coverage of the wedding of Representative Adam Clayton Powell's son and a New England socialite is illustrative: The *Post* society reporter returned with a near-column of vintage Powellisms (although the day was hot, the Congressman said, his ministerial robe was not uncomfortable because "I ain't got nothin' on underneath. . . ."). Miss Beale's straightforward story (she described the bride's dress in paragraph two) contained only one Powell quote: He thought the wedding was "wonderful." But old-line Washington society finds Betty Beale a better guest than the *Post*'s Maxine Cheshire, who throws a meaner harpoon than Captain Ahab.

On another level, the *Star* system permits the reporter on the scene—not a distant editor—to decide how a story is written. Here the *Star* contrasts sharply with the *Post*. "The first time I covered an out-of-town meeting," says a former *Star* man, "I heard the *Post* reporter call his desk, say, 'This is what happened,' and tick off the points one-two-three. The editor told him what to lead with.

"I hadn't been in Washington long, and I decided this was the way big city papers worked. I called Sidney Epstein, who was then the city editor, and gave him the one-two-three routine. There was silence. I thought he had hung up. I asked what he wanted for a lead.

"Epstein exploded. 'Goddammit,' he said, 'you are there. If you can't recognize the story, come on back to Washington and we'll send someone else.' I never forgot the lesson."

There are chinks in the *Star*'s editorial armor. Staffers complain they are outmanned everywhere by the richer *Post*; that Newby Noyes, in the last few years, has drifted distressingly far away from the daily news operation; that the *Star* operates without purpose. Political writer David Broder, when he left the *Star*, complained to friends its news coverage was "unstructured." There are also frequent gripes that the *Star* skimps on coverage to avoid overtime.

The *Star*'s strict what-he-says objectivity disturbs many young reporters. A former reporter who began his *Star* career as a dictationist, taking stories from other staff members over the phone, said, "It bugged me when Garnett Horner (the *Star*'s veteran White House correspondent) would call with a story on a Johnson statement on Vietnam. Horner would give exactly what the President said, without any attempt at interpretation or backtracking to compare it with last week's lies. We'd run a story that could have been written by the White House press office. Oh, there were advantages to this. We'd get first offer on color photos of the First Family on birthdays and anniversaries, and when the babies were born. But was it worth it?"

Noyes, in rebuttal, maintains the *Star* avoids close friendship with public officials, be they Presidents or whatnot. One apparent exception is FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, who gave the *Star* first peek at documents supporting his side of the prolonged wiretapping dispute with the late Robert F. Kennedy.

According to Noyes, this friendship began in the 1930's, when *Star* editorial writer Rex Collier scripted a comic strip on the FBI. "Mr. Hoover would talk with Collier when he wouldn't talk with anyone else," Noyes said.

Noyes gives this account:

Hoover came to the *Star* for one of the background luncheons held frequently for public officials and other important persons. An editor asked a question about alleged FBI wiretaps on Martin Luther King, Jr., and quoted Kennedy as saying he knew nothing about them.

"Kennedy is a pathological liar," Noyes quotes the FBI director as replying. Hoover said he had memoranda requesting permission to tap phones which bore Kennedy's approving initials as Attorney General.

Several months later, Noyes said, Kennedy attended a similar luncheon and "categorically denied" knowing of the taps.

"I didn't want to create a scene at the luncheon," Noyes said, "so I asked Kennedy and Frank Mankiewicz, who was with him, to stop by my office. I told them what Hoover had said, and they

continued

looked at one another and shrugged. 'I don't know what he (Hoover) is talking about,' Kennedy said." So Noyes dispatched a reporter to Hoover's office to request the memoranda, and a few days later the *Star* had itself an exclusive story.

Haynes Johnson's resignation disturbed Newbold Noyes. Although the parting was friendly, he feared its psychological impact on other reporters, and he wanted to do something quickly to offset it. So a few days after Johnson left, Noyes hired Jim Doyle, the thirty-four-year-old Washington bureau chief of the Boston Globe.

Doyle is relatively unknown in Washington because few persons here except Massachusetts Congressmen read the Globe. *But he is a former Nieman fellow, and he is respected among newspapermen as a tough, aggressive reporter who can get stories no one else has.*

"When I first talked with the Star," *Doyle said, "I was curious about what they were doing. It puzzled me that they had lost a position of dominance, and I wanted to know if they were capitulating, or fighting.*

"I had some rather frank conversations with Noyes and Seib, the managing editor. And I became convinced that the Star *is fully committed to doing a better job than they have been doing. So I hired on.*

"Some people would look at it as a risk for me, but I don't think so. Nobody has to hang their head about working for the Washington Star." □